

YELLOWSTONE RIVER CONSERVATION DISTRICT COUNCIL

CONSERVATION DISTRICT MEMBERS: Carbon, Custer, Dawson, Park, Prairie, Richland, Rosebud, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, Treasure, Yellowstone, McKenzie County North Dakota, RAC Chairman

Meeting Minutes -- April 20, 2006

MSU-Billings College of Business – Room 163

Members Present: Paul Gilbert, Sweet Grass CD; Tony Barone, Richland CD; Don Youngbauer, Rosebud CD; Phil Fox, Treasure CD; Bob Hector, Yellowstone CD; Steve Story, Stillwater CD; Dave Schwarz, Prairie CD; Luther Waterland, MACD; Walter Rolf, Custer CD; John Moorhouse, RAC Chairman and Orvin Finsaas, McKenzie ND, CD.

Others Present: Warren Kellogg, NRCS/TAC; Jim Robinson, DNRC; Burt Williams, TNC/RAC; Mike Penfold, Yellowstone River Forum; Gay Easton, Yellowstone CD; Laurie Zeller, DNRC; Pat Riley, DNRC; Greg Johnson, COE; Kelly Gilbertson, Project Assistant, and Carol Watts, Custer CD.

Chairman Paul Gilbert called the meeting to order at 12:20 pm on Thursday, April 20, 2006. Introductions were made.

TAC update: The Yellowstone TAC notes are attached. Warren yielded the floor to Greg Johnson, COE since he had to leave soon to catch a plane. Greg gave an update on the COE budget and reported that sole-source contracts were awarded to MSU-Bozeman for the Avian Study and MSU-Billings for the Cultural Values Study. Hydrology work above the Big Horn should be completed by June 1 and the hydraulic modeling for Yellowstone and Big Horn counties will start in May. There is still \$200,000.00 in the President's proposed budget for 2007.

Warren thanked John Moorhouse, RAC/YRCDC, Dave Schwarz, YRCDC and Laurie Zeller, DNRC for attending the TAC meeting.

Geomorphology: Warren said they were looking at using GIS to streamline the geomorphology scope that would provide a useful product right away and be completed at a relatively low cost. At this point he turned the discussion over to Jim Robinson who showed slides to the Council.

Jim Robinson explained that Karin Boyd had done a presentation for the TAC on GIS-based inundation zone mapping of the Big Hole River as a floodplain management tool. She also explained how the channel could migrate over a period of time. Jim brought the slides to show the Council how GIS could be used to designate "hazard" zones based upon the tendency of the channel to move around. The TAC asked for direction from the Council to explore this concept and put together a detailed scope of work with estimated costs. The information has already been created that would be used in this mapping. The LiDAR topographic mapping is more detailed, but the money may not be available any time soon. This approach is at a lower cost and is already available to begin the work. If Corps funding should become available later the LiDAR could always be added to it. The mapping could also be available to the counties in their floodplain management efforts but a disclaimer on the mapping resolution would need to be attached. Warren commented on how this information would be helpful in implementing the 310 program, determining irrigation projects, etc. because it would be possible to predict where future flood and bank erosion/migration might occur. The Council had no objection and gave the TAC permission to bring a detailed scope of work to them at their next meeting.

Don Youngbauer said he felt it was very important to fix in people's minds that the river moves. He also felt that we should have an education campaign to bring this to people's attention. He said he had spoken with a representative of the Montana Water Course, and they would be willing to help write articles for the newspapers concerning facts about the Yellowstone River to help educate the public.

GIS work orders were discussed, and it was decided that a committee of Walter Rolf, Paul Gilbert, and Dave Schwarz could approve a work order when a Council meeting was not scheduled. This would be done on a "notice to proceed" document and will be signed off on a routing slip.

Landowner contact lists were discussed. Warren said all the counties but two have an updated landowner list. Richland and Stillwater/Carbon will be done next week. The District Administrators will be asked to finish the lists with the current contact information (phone #s). There will be technical studies started this spring and summer. John Moorhouse said he needed help from RAC members to come up with names of residential property owners on the river that would be willing to be interviewed as part of the cultural values study. See Warren's notes for more details.

Recent equipment purchases by the YRCDC include a PC tablet, Arc Pad software, and a digital camera. These will be paid for out of the current RDGP grant and used primarily for the riparian work. Warren thanked Kelly Gilbertson and Carol Watts for their help in the purchasing process.

Alternate funding will be researched by getting Request for Proposals via MSU-Billings.

Warren said the scanned and geo-referenced 1950s photos have been posted on the Yellowstone River web-site. The 1976 photography is also on there from Springdale to Intake. There will be a demonstration using this photography on bank line migration at the June YRCDC meeting.

Laurie spoke about the projects that have been submitted to DNRC for the special one-time money grant. The following projects were funded; Pryor Creek fish barrier removal, an alternative bank stabilization project in Richland County, a fish passage project in Park County, debris removal, cottonwood re-establishment in Park County, salt cedar mapping in Sweet Grass County, and weed control along the Yellowstone River. There is a possibility of getting another project funded. The Yellowstone River CD Council had the most projects funded. Bob Hector commented that this is an opportunity to get good coverage for the Council through a media press release.

Jim Robinson commented that in the 1970s the DNRC generated a significant environmental impact study associated with projected water withdrawals due to proposed coal development in Yellowstone County. The studies show the effects on furbearing animals, migratory birds, agricultural, and municipal infrastructures. These have been scanned and put into portable document files (pdf), and it would be possible to put them on the web-site. These were prepared for the Old West Regional Commission. Warren feels that it would be good to have a common reference section on the web-site that could be accessed. It was pointed out that the conservation districts reserved water came about because of the study. The Council had no objection to this, and it was approved by consensus.

Interim Coordinator update: Dave Schwarz reported that a letter had been sent to Mary Sexton requesting that Don Youngbauer serve on the Governor's work group for best management practices formulation for rivers and streams of Montana.

The Dr. Bauder support letter for a comparative study on irrigation practices at Buffalo Rapids was also sent out. This study compares fields with EQIP practices and those without. It is hoped to form BMPs from the study and this would be in line with what the CES study is all about.

Copies of the avian pilot study have been sent out to all the participating landowners.

John Tubbs had requested a letter indicating what the Council's intentions were as far as making up the imbalance between the federal cost share amount and the state cost share amount. This letter was written reiterating our efforts to get an earmark for one million dollars and our efforts to attain the two million dollar appropriation for the Army Corps of Engineers. Alternative funding sources were also mentioned.

Dave Schwarz is still looking at the Fortune 100 companies and trying to determine what the best strategy is for that. Schwarz will also be in contact with MSU-Billings concerning foundation grants.

A tele-conference was held between Dave Schwarz, Laurie Zeller, Paul Gilbert, Liz Ching, and Baucus's Resource person Paul Wilkens to discuss funding in Washington DC. Requests have been made, and now it is time to wait and see what the outcome will be. Laurie Zeller added that Buzz Mattlin from MACD was in Washington DC and he talked to the top COE people and brought them up to speed on the study. Contacts will need to be made again in a couple weeks.

Dave Schwarz is also working on a spreadsheet for tracking grants.

Laurie Zeller commented that the budget increase has been approved.

Mike Penfold drew attention to the American Rivers article in the paper saying that association is designating the Yellowstone River as the second most threatened river in the US. They charge the COE with not completing the CES study. This is a nation wide broadcast and will certainly be noticed. Paul Gilbert suggested that John Moorhouse should contact American Rivers.

Mike Penfold also said the Energy and Environmental Research Group is interested in opening an office in Billings. They are contacting Conoco, Exxon, and Cenex concerning interest in research on the Yellowstone River. Mike Penfold thought it would be a good idea if a Council representative would talk to Exxon and Conoco about their use of the Yellowstone River. He said the Forum would be happy to participate. Dave Schwarz and Mike Penfold will pursue this effort.

There was some discussion of the COE and Congressmen being in attendance for the Lewis and Clark celebration starting at Intake. There were ideas on how the Council could participate but nothing was planned at this time. It was suggested that in the future the Council may be able to plan some float trips or tours along with a regular meeting.

Laurie Zeller described the display units that the counties involved with the Marias River Council had made. Warren suggested the person who built the displays should be contacted to attend a future meeting.

Budget Committee Report: There wasn't an actual budget committee meeting but a group consisting of Carol Watts, Laurie Zeller, Kelly Gilbertson, Warren Kellogg and Jim Robinson did meet before the regular meeting to discuss where we are with the grants and how to best use the remaining funds. There can be no carryover in the pass through grant this year, and it looks like the money will be spent. We will reinstate a watershed grant that has expired and use up the remaining funds in the EPA-RGI grant before it expires.

Discussion: Progress on the annual report will be continued tomorrow. Laurie Zeller has not had time to work on it. Laurie has been busy documenting federal match. She said that for all of the projects in FY04 and FY05 we accumulated 1.5 million in match already, so we have already met our 25% cost share. We are short the \$800,000.00 in federal money to match the 2002 RDGP grant.

At this time in the meeting Chairman Paul Gilbert read a statement called "Attitudes" to provide inspiration to the group.

There was a clarification on the list of counties in the Standing Rules and the web site will be added to the fact sheet otherwise the documents were accepted as written.

Business meeting: Treasurer's report was given by Carol Watts. The financial statement shows all the activity in the account since the last meeting and the grant statement shows where we are with the grants. Carol noted that one of columns did not have the right formula in it, and the correct amount was stated. The reports were approved and filed for audit.

Minutes of the March 24, 2006 teleconference were reviewed. John Moorhouse made a motion to approve the minutes. Don Youngbauer seconded the motion. There were no objections and the motion passed by voice vote.

If needed, there will be a tele-conference in May. The next meeting will be June 15, 2006 at noon. Warren will have a TAC update. The Council is hoping the Marisa River display will be available. The meeting adjourned at 3:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Watts, CCCD Administrator

YRCDC TAC Meeting
Billings, MT
April 19, 2006

Funding of the Yellowstone Cumulative Effects

Dave Schwarz reviewed the Council's funding requests for FFY2006 (additional 250K) and FFY2007 (2 million) that were forwarded on to the Congressional delegation. There have also been representatives from MACD and the Governor's Office who traveled to Washington DC in recent weeks meeting with the delegation and various agencies regarding the Yellowstone CES, including the Corps. The status of these requests should be known by early May.

Greg Johnson (Corps) provided an update on the FFY2006 budget for the Yellowstone. After the 1% across-the-board recession, there is \$396,000 with an additional \$8,000 carry over from last fiscal year. There may be additional FFY 2006 reprogrammed funds. If so, an additional 100K would fund the 2nd year of the avian study.

The President's 2007 budget has only 200K for the Yellowstone CES. It is one of five studies from the Coe's NW Division that made it in the President's proposed budget.

In early March, sole source contracts were awarded to MSU-Bozeman for the avian study (\$64,991 – 1st year) and MSU-Billings for the cultural values study (\$102,702). Hydrology work above the Big Horn should be completed by June 1 (40K). The hydraulic modeling for Yellowstone and Stillwater counties will start in May (50K + 20K from FEMA) that will lead up to completing the draft floodplain maps for those two counties by the end of the year.

Alternative Funding

Dave Schwarz and Dr. McGinnis (MSU-Billings Grants Director) lead a discussion on other possible sources of funding for some of the scopes of work in lieu of Corps funding. Dr. McGinnis will start forwarding grant Raps to Dave Schwarz and Warren Kellogg as they come across his desk. Dr. McGinnis has been a reviewer of National Science Foundation grant applications and involved in "biocomplexity" research. We may be able to take advantage of his experience as we move into the cumulative effects analysis stages of the Project Management Plan.

Geomorphology

Karin Boyd gave a presentation on a GIS-based inundation zone mapping as a floodplain management tool. Most FEMA-approved floodplain mapping costs ~ 25K/mile. The Zone A mapping recently completed in the Big Hole, using the inundation mapping model, cost about \$300-500/mile. This mapping is based upon USGS 30 meter DEMs that can be used to delineate the approximate the 100 year floodplain boundary (Level A floodplain mapping).

Karin also presented GIS modeling of channel migration that projects how far a channel might move in a given period of time. This technique may be a relatively low cost approach of designating reaches prone to various rates of channel movement. This idea will be presented to the Council as a partial revision of the geomorphic scope of work that could be funded through the 2005 RDG grant. A recommendation will be made to develop a detailed scope of work to bring back to the Council at their next meeting.

Jim Robinson talked about the possible use of "intermap" as an alternative approach to Lidar for acquiring topographic information in the remaining counties. The accuracy of intermap appears to be as nearly good as Lidar and is considerably cheaper. The only problem is that it will likely not be available for Montana until 2007 or 2008.

Photo Acquisition Up-date

1950s coverage (all counties) and the 1976 coverage (Springdale to Intake) have been posted on the Yellowstone River web site. Bank lines and flow lines from various photo coverages have also been digitized and posted to the web site. There will be a presentation to the Council sometime this summer on these products.

Greg Johnson will try to get early 1980s color infrared photography from the USFWS, especially for the reach from Intake down to the Missouri River.

The indices for the 1930s photography have been acquired. This coverage is not complete for the entire Yellowstone River. Sample photography for two study reaches been used for historic wetland/riparian mapping have been ordered.

The scanned 1997 flood photography acquired from Horizon has been delivered. These aerial photos will be used to calibrate the hydraulic model. Greg Johnson will check into whether or not the Corps can georectify them.

Socioeconomics Scope – Cultural Values

Susan Gilbertz (MSU-Billings) up-dated the TAC on the pending field work for the cultural values interviews. She introduced the recently hired Program Coordinator for the study. The contract with the Corps is in place and the only thing she is waiting on is OMB's approval of the interview questions. Greg Johnson will follow-up on the status of this approval. Susan expects to begin the interviews by mid-May. She will work closely with Dave Schwarz, John Moorhouse (RAC), and the CDs on identifying interviewees and making the contacts.

Avian Scope

Danielle Jones (MSU-Bozeman) gave the TAC an up-date on their up-coming field work. They will be hiring four technicians who will begin their field work in late May and go to July 1st. The list of study site selections is forthcoming. We will closely with Dave Schwarz and the individual CDs on making the initial contacts prior to them going to the field. Dave Schwarz has sent out copies of the 2005 avian pilot study, funded by The Nature Conservancy, to the landowners involved in the study last summer.

Riparian Scope

Warren Kellogg presented a conceptual outline of the riparian field methodology that NRCS will be using. They intend to begin their field work sometime by mid to late summer. There will be three tiers of data collection: 1) study reach, 2) parcel or subreach, and 3) point/transect. Much of the focus of the riparian will be to look at the changes in riparian extent and land use over time and land management relationships to riparian condition/invasive species. There will also be investigation in how the physical features are tied to riparian extent, serial stage, and condition. The Council has recently purchase field equipment (PC Tablet and digital camera) that will greatly improve and accelerate the collection of data.

Information Management

Jim Robinson reported that the DNRC has scanned 1970s-vintage technical studies on the Yellowstone river that cover an array of topics. A recommendation will be made to the Council to post these studies on their web site under a "References" heading.

June TAC Meeting

The next TAC meeting is scheduled for June 14th in Billings. Topics that will tentatively be included on the agenda are:

Hydrology scope

Hydraulics Scope

310 GIS Web Application Demonstration

DTM GIS Deliverables/Presentation

FFY 2006/2007 Budget up-date

Avian Field Work Up-date

Cultural Values interviews Up-date

Geomorphology – Draft Scope of Work – Inundation and channel migration